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ABSTRACT

Building on a survey of the role of religious institutions in programs for high-risk youth and consultations with experts in the field, a field demonstration project was implemented to test strategies for using religious institutions to anchor local partnerships aimed at high-risk youth. The partnerships were designed to address the developmental needs of the highest-risk young people, those whom most programs, and social policy itself, seem to have abandoned. This report, based on the first year of working with these programs, is the first of a series to come. The 11 collaborative sites represent a variety of approaches, diversity of religious and ethnic traditions, and a multiplicity of geographical areas, both urban and suburban. Early lessons from these sites are the: (1) challenge of capacity building; (2) challenge of connecting with funding sources; (3) challenge of evaluation; (4) need for focused leadership; (5) challenge of targeting high-risk youth; (6) need for collaboration; (7) importance of planning and program strategies; (8) importance of building relationships of trust; and (9) role of faith. Preliminary findings point to the importance of faith-based initiatives in working with high-risk youth. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)

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Faith-Based Institutions and High-Risk Youth

First report to the Field

Harold Dean Trulear

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Field Report Series

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FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS AND HIGH-RISK YOUTH

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Acknowledgments

Funding for this demonstration has come from a variety of sources. The Ford Foundation has been the single largest contributor, supporting both our work at P/PV and the operational budgets of four of the sites. Fred Davie, program officer at Ford, has been a valued colleague in this initiative, and has provided important insight to the project's development through his extensive background in partnerships with government. The Pinkerton Foundation and its president, Joan Colello, deserve special thanks both for their substantial ongoing support and for their early grant which allowed us to explore the potential of this initiative. Support for this work has also come from The Charles F. Hayden Foundation, which is also supporting the work of two sites. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has supported documentation of the work being done in the field; Carole Thompson, program officer at Casey, has provided valuable assistance in thinking through the relationship between this initiative and other faith-based efforts around the country. The Stuart Foundation supports both P/PV and the west coast site operations; program officer, Colin Lacon, has been very helpful.

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This report owes a special debt of gratitude to the countless clergy, youth workers and volunteers from the faith-based organizations involved in this demonstration project. Their stories and faces were a constant source of motivation in the completion of this, the first of a series of field reports. Similarly, the cooperation and on-the-ground work of the juvenile justice and law enforcement communities brings us to thank its constituency for their input to this draft. From his drafting of the concept paper on which this initiative is based through his tireless support of the work of this demonstration, P/PV president, Gary Walker, has provided wisdom and insight into the construction of the initiative, as well as counsel to initiative staff, such as the author, for whom this project was a first undertaking. P/PV executive vice president, Bernardine Watson, has been the best of professional colleagues in helping us to organize our work and bringing to it the best of her experience in youth development. P/PV senior counsel and board member, John DiIulio, is worthy of special thanks, both for his work in developing much of the research material on which this initiative is based, and for his important efforts to raise the work of faith-based organizations' ministry to high-risk youth to an issue of national awareness and public policy.

Project staff, including Bonita Williams, Terry Cooper and Shawn Mooring, have been colleagues in learning and thinking around the issues in this report. Aided by P/PV veteran Kathryn Furano, Bonnie has given much of the organizational structure to the initiative as well. Research staff Laurie Kotloff and Karen Walker have provided valuable insight to this work. Support staff Helen Gill, Joyce Jones and Tamara Wilson were all part of the process of collecting and organizing information. Thank you to Maxine Sherman for shepherding this document through the marvelous editing of Natalie Jaffe; also to Ronnette Belle who typed and provided editing for several drafts. Consultants Bob Penn, Alphonso Wyatt, Dale Irvin and Verley Sangster helped us sort through some of the complex problems posed in proposing a marriage between the necessary infrastructure of serious community service and the religious community's historic and formidable ability to do some of its best work through informal relationships.

Public/Private Ventures' research and experience in the youth field indicate that most high-risk youth in poor communities are not reached by traditional public and nonprofit youth programs. Further, in many of these communities there are few and sometimes no traditional programs to even try to reach these youth. At the same time, most of the communities in which these young people live are served by churches and other faith-based institutions and programs that are both well-established and seriously concerned about the welfare and future of these youth.

In 1997 P/PV began to investigate the extent to which faith-based institutions serve high-risk youth—by high-risk youth we mean youth who are already involved in criminal and violent activities or who have been deemed likely candidates for such behavior by neighborhood residents, law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies, school officials or community leaders—as well as the efficacy of their programs and their capacity to reach greater numbers of youth. This investigation was propelled by the success of Boston's Ten Point Coalition—a group of congregations organized in 1992 to respond to that city's youth violence in partnership with the criminal justice and law enforcement communities, and with social service agencies. The result of this partnership has been a substantial reduction in youth crime, and a subsequent increase in attention to other strategies for youth development.

In August 1997, P/PV hosted a meeting of about 40 religious leaders from across the country whose congregations and organizations were in various stages of developing and implementing programs they term "outreach ministries"—programs that target high-risk youth. Representing faith communities from a variety of religious traditions, many of these leaders had heard of, or were inspired by, the work of the Ten Point Coalition. They were committed to seeking similar juvenile crime reduction in their own communities. P/PV staff then began to visit other cities where congregations and other faith-based organizations were trying to develop and enhance their own work with high-risk youth and were having varying degrees of success.

Our site visits to nearly two dozen cities revealed faith-based organizations that, like the Ten Point Coalition, address not only issues of crime and violence but also of drug use, poor education and access to meaningful employment. We talked not only with religious leaders but also with leaders in the juvenile justice and law enforcement systems, community-based organizations, municipal and county government, public education and the foundation community to become better informed about the types of faith-based programming being pursued and, in particular, about the role that congregations play in their implementation.

Building on our survey findings and consultations with researchers and activists in the field, we decided to launch a field demonstration project to test strategies for using religious institutions to anchor local partnerships aimed at high-risk youth. The partnerships were designed to address the developmental needs of the nation's highest-risk youth—those young people whom most social programs and, indeed, social policy seem to have abandoned. The initiative has three primary goals: (1) to decrease involvement with crime and drugs; (2) to increase educational achievement; and (3) to help prepare the youth for productive employment. The demonstration is designed to produce ongoing and credible information about the implementation, effectiveness and penetration of initiative activities—information that not only informs policymakers and funders but also improves the operational capacity of participating religious institutions and serves as a learning base for similar efforts across the country. This information will fill a critical need at a time when the issue of the role of faith-based institutions in meeting community needs, delivering social services and promoting the general welfare is an important issue of public discussion. This report, based on our survey findings and the first year of working with the sites, is the first of a series.

The Demonstration

During the summer of 1998, P/PV identified 15 sites for potential inclusion in the national demonstration. We invited them to apply for participation by submitting a document laying out specific plans for implementing their programs in the first two years of the demonstration. We were interested in the capacity of these organizations to work through the process of strategic planning; to develop and maintain sufficient financial support for their work; to identify high-risk youth populations and strategies to recruit them into the programs; to network with juvenile justice and law enforcement agencies; to mobilize, support and sustain a significant congregation-based volunteer labor force for the initiative; and to demonstrate a clear commitment to their faith traditions as an anchoring and mobilizing force in their work.

Further, on the basis of our observations in Boston and research on community-serving ministries in general, we sought congregations with a significant percentage of members residing in the immediate neighborhood. Proximity makes it possible for volunteers to serve during formal program hours as well as informally through encounters on streets and playgrounds, in stores and on stoops. One striking fact from our early reconnaissance of inner-city churches is the increasing number of commuter churches, especially among African Americans. Many of the larger churches that command the attention of casual observers of the urban scene are increasingly made up of middle-class members who commute from other neighborhoods. While there is often a social service component to their outreach ministries, it usually operates during limited, defined hours and in a client mode that reflects the traditional models of service delivery in which a congregation's members are trained. And while such work has clear benefits to the host community, it tends not to provide the type of labor-intensive relationship building available when congregation members live in the neighborhood.

P/PV staff worked with potential sites in the process of initial planning. This contact enriched our initial assessments of the infrastructure of the interested faith-based organizations and their ability to sustain the work of the initiative over time.

The Sites

While the challenges of infrastructure and resource development have loomed large for faith-based organizations in this work, we discovered enough faith-based organizations with sufficient organizational capacity and infrastructure to develop a national demonstration project. They vary in size, theological and religious orientation, program strategy and geographic location, but all focus on working with the most difficult-to-reach youth in their communities.

In December 1998, eight sites were selected for participation: Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco/Oakland and Seattle. Los Angeles, Brooklyn and Indianapolis were added as sites in early 2000. In each city, P/PV identified a collaborative of faith-based institutions that either had a strong track record in working with high-risk youth or were well positioned by virtue of meeting the criteria mentioned in the section above. The collaboratives represent a variety of approaches, diversity of religious and ethnic traditions, and a multiplicity of geographical (inner-city, suburban, working-class neighborhoods) and regional (Northeast, Midwest, West, Northwest, South) venues. All but the southern region are currently represented in the demonstration, although we are still considering three southern cities for participation. Each collaborative has identified one faith-based organization as the "lead agency" that is working directly with P/PV staff during the course of the initiative.

Boston is the lead site in the demonstration: its lead agency is the Azusa Christian Community, a local Pentecostal church, and its community center, the Ella J. Baker House. The pastor of Azusa, the Rev. Eugene Rivers, has established himself as a credible leader in Dorchester, the neighborhood in which the church and community center are located. He has extensive experience in street outreach, community activism and youth ministry. The congregation consists primarily of young adult men and women who have relocated to the neighborhood in order to develop a strong relationship with neighborhood youth and their families, and to develop programs that serve the most difficult-to-reach young people in the area surrounding the church. Boston community leaders, law enforcement officials and members of the juvenile justice system all deem Baker House a key institution in the development of the Ten Point Coalition in general and in its work in reducing juvenile crime and violence in Dorchester in particular.

Of the remaining sites, **Indianapolis** seeks to replicate the work of Boston through the development of its own Ten Point Coalition. It has been working with Rev. Rivers and his staff to organize congregations in that city in a manner that enables them to use the basic components of the Boston Ten Point plan in ways that address the unique situation of Indianapolis, including the support of faith-based community programming by the immediate past administration of Mayor Stephen Goldsmith.

Brooklyn is also using the Ten Point Coalition model. They are working with the King's County District Attorney's office, which has developed a program called Communities and Law Enforcement Resources Together (ComALERT). ComALERT develops relationships with local community organizations to provide case management support for persons under the supervision of the probation and parole departments. The Brooklyn Ten Point Coalition receives referrals directly from the ComALERT program.

In the other cities, the sites have developed initiatives that may use elements of the Ten Point plan but are clearly derived from local assessments of congregational capacity and community outreach. In **Detroit**, the work of the Michigan Neighborhood Partnership and four constituent partners are implementing a variety of juvenile violence reduction strategies in their neighborhoods. Notable among these are the work of Gang Retirement And Continuing Education

and Employment (GRACE), which works with black and Latino youth in Southwest Detroit, and the Rosedale Park Baptist Church in Northwest Detroit, which is working closely with local public schools and juvenile justice institutions to identify and develop programs for troubled youth in their neighborhood.

In **Denver**, the Metro Denver Black Church Initiative, begun through the work of The Piton Foundation and its program officer Grant Jones, has developed five sites for high-risk youth ministry, including one that focuses exclusively on young girls and women in trouble with the law.

The San Francisco Foundation, led by program officer Dwayne Marsh, and its Foundation Alliance of Interfaith to Heal Society (FAITHS) launched two initiatives: in **San Francisco**, a juvenile detention facility chaplain will not only work with youth in her facility but will also build relationships between the youth and the houses of worship in their neighborhoods in order to provide a network of caring adults for the youth upon release. In **West Oakland**, clergy and congregations are teaming with law enforcement officials to provide mentors for troubled youth, identify educational needs, and facilitate access to meaningful employment and civic responsibility.

In the **South Bronx**, a parachurch ministry, the Urban Youth Alliance, has a 30-year track record of working with high school youth across the city of New York. For the demonstration, it has partnered with a local religious organization, the Latino Pastoral Action Center, and a neighborhood congregation, Love Gospel Assembly, to provide mentoring, recreation, counseling, and church and educational programming for gang youth in that neighborhood.

In **Southwest Philadelphia**, the local black clergy, through the African American Interdenominational Ministries organization, is building a network of existing and new services for post-adjudicated youth, based on the capacity and programming of local churches and community organizations.

In **Cleveland**, Clergy United for Juvenile Justice has developed Project Restoration, a program for post-adjudicated youth, which features after-school group therapy sessions; rites of passage, martial arts and discipline training; recreation and arts activities; and church-based mentoring.

In **Seattle**, the Church Council of Greater Seattle has facilitated a link between its own constituency, inner-city black congregations and the Northwest Leadership Foundation to build on the latter's efforts in inner-city youth work, and leverage its own institutional and financial resources to help work with difficult-to-reach youth. Finally, in **Los Angeles**, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches, a group of 40 congregations with memberships between 50 and 800, has developed a strategy to equip churches to provide GED education for young men coming out of the California Corrections system. Among the unique features of this model is that their congregations were able, over a two-year period, to have the California legislature enact the basic structure of their program as state law, with Los Angeles County serving as a pilot site for a five-year period. The Los Angeles Unified and Englewood Unified School Districts have pledged support, and Los Angeles County has assigned two parole officers to the initiative.

Currently, P/PV is working with religious organizations in several other cities that exhibit significant potential for inclusion in the demonstration—Austin, Baton Rouge, Fresno, Memphis and Washington, D.C. In each of these cities, we have identified program strategies whose implementation has already contributed to a reduction in juvenile crime and violence.

P/PV provides technical assistance to all of these groups in hopes of maximizing their capacity to provide consistent service without changing the religious and relational nature that makes the service distinctive and viable. Program and field

staff regularly visit and provide phone audits for each site. Regional and national conferences are held to help sites work on common issues and mutual resourcing. The first cross-site conference for site leaders took place in March 1999 and was also attended by representatives of the funding community and religious leaders from other organizations working with high-risk youth to form a larger learning community. The three-day conference introduced each sites' initiative, or program, to the larger learning community and explored such implementation issues as collaboration building; partnerships with law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies, and the employment world; best practices in mentoring; and self-monitoring and evaluation. The second cross-site conference will be held in May 2000 in Boston. At this conference, sites will be able to experience directly the work of the Asuza Christian Community and the Ella J. Baker House. The technical assistance being provided at this conference will focus on understanding urban adolescent culture, specifically gang life and activity, "gangsta" rap music, and what Elijah Anderson has called "the code of the streets" (Anderson, 1999).

The Research

Our research on the work of these sites focuses on the following key issues. (1) congregational capacity for program implementation, (2) the role of faith in service delivery, (3) the extent of faith-based organizations' reach into the community, and (4) the impact of the initiative on youth and their communities.

"Congregational capacity" refers to the faith-based organization's ability to form strategic partnerships, leverage and manage resources, build community support, actively involve congregants in a range of supportive roles for youth, and develop and implement sound programmatic strategies and services that engage the most seriously at-risk youth.

In assessing the role of faith, we will investigate the extent to which the fact that the initiative is church- or faith-based influences the organization's ability to form partnerships and leverage and manage resources. We also want to know how the issue of faith influences the shape of the program and its approach to youth as well as the extent to which faith is a factor in attracting and engaging youth. Of specific interest here is how faith serves as both motivation and support for paid staff and volunteers as well as youth. Also, we wish to explore how explicitly religious organizations engage nonreligious organizations and populations, both in the practice of partnership and the delivery of service.

In assessing the faith-based organizations' reach into the community, we will determine how many youth are served and at what levels of intensity. Also of interest are the factors that influence the initiative's ability to identify and recruit seriously at-risk youth and sustain their participation. Finally, youth and community impact will be measured through documenting the effects of the program on the youth's gang involvement or criminal activity, academic performance and access to meaningful employment. We will also investigate community impact through noting what influence, if any, the initiative has on other community organizations and institutions that are either involved with high-risk youth (e.g., police department, juvenile justice agencies) or who have a say in how these institutions do their work (e.g., political leaders).

Early Learnings

1. The Challenge of Capacity Building

Our early research set out to look specifically at the extent to which congregations and other faith-based organizations work with high-risk youth as well as the efficacy of those programs and the capacity of the organizations to implement them. Our first lesson was that many of the organizations involved in this work are very small, tradition oriented and personality driven.

By "small," we refer to congregations that operate with a part-time pastor (bivocational ministers, in the church parlance—they work full time in a secular vocation and serve their congregations on nights and weekends); a church membership of between 50 and 200 (which offers a limited pool of volunteer staff); little if any budgeted resources for the work; and, sometimes, no formal incorporated or legal status as a religious nonprofit organization. Without much organizational infrastructure, the work emphasizes building relationships and time spent on the streets. These organizations persist in doing this work because of a strong sense of mission, and they place little, if any, emphasis on strategic planning or evaluation.

By "tradition oriented," we mean congregations that have always viewed themselves as comprehensive institutions that meet a variety of needs and stress the inclusive nature of their outreach. This represents a challenge when a congregation is asked to use different methods or, in the case of high-risk youth ministry, to focus on a particular population at the expense of a more inclusive vision. In some cases, churches protested our initiative's distinction between at-risk and high-risk youth. While they worked with young people who clearly needed attention, these young people did not always represent the hardest to reach. The challenge to focus on a particular population flew in the face of the traditions of these congregations, which had always had a more inclusive vision for community ministry. In one city, congregations wanted to expand the notion of "high risk" to include teenaged mothers, while in another, truants were offered as a target of outreach. This attitude resulted not from a lack of information concerning what constitutes or predicts high-risk behavior in a juvenile but from the congregations' historical tendency, in communities drastically underserved by social and community institutions, to develop a self-image of comprehensive and inclusive ministry.

By "personality driven," we refer to the work of strong individuals whose personal faith motivation would serve to sustain an initiative in the early stages. In Boston, the ministry of Azusa Christian Community clearly revolves around the strong personality of Rev. Eugene Rivers, not only in terms of his vision for the work but also in the example he has set through relocating himself and his family in the inner city to build relationships within the community.

In Cleveland, the Clergy United for Juvenile Justice (CUJJ) draws immense energy from its leader, Rev. Ralph Hughley. Hughley, who is also the chaplain at the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center, is a veritable magnet for the young people in that facility. He is able to communicate with some of the most difficult residents and is sought after by residents and staff alike to resolve disputes and provide counsel. But Hughley also draws clergy and congregations to work together. The coalition of churches and mosques whose members are active in the CUJJ project represent a disparate group of religious traditions for whom Hughley's passion for troubled youth has been a rallying cry for action.

In Cleveland's program, Qadwi Bey, a Muslim who works as a solar energy systems designer and lives in the community, spends his afternoons as part of the after-school program of CUJJ, serving as a mentor, teacher and father figure. Post-adjudicated youth spend time in his home as a safe haven; they have his pager number.

Bey and Hughley appear in court, if necessary, with the young people with whom they work.

It is legitimate to ask what form any of these initiatives would take were it not for the central reality of a strong personality at the helm and what changes the broadened mandate of this initiative will require.

2. The Challenge of Connecting with Funding Sources

The majority of faith-based organizations that work with high-risk youth have not been well connected to available public resources or to existing private and philanthropic funding. Many congregations offer theological and philosophical reasons for not getting involved with public funding. They are appropriately wary of the strings that often come attached to public funding, especially the rigorous accountability required by government agencies. They also wrestle with the perceived threat of government control of their programs. Indeed, while Mark Chaves' data rightly shows that black churches are more likely than any other religious group to express willingness to accept public funding for their outreach work, the figure for black Baptist congregations (40%) is still less than half those surveyed (Chaves, 1998). The number does rise to 64 percent when considering all congregations in Chaves' survey with at least an 80 percent black membership. The difference may be explained by the presence of black congregations in more middle-class and mainline denominations in the latter sample. But these are not the congregations that make up the majority of those in our demonstration. The congregations with which we are working are more likely the smaller churches represented in the black Baptist numbers in the Chaves data, and his research also shows less willingness to accept public funding among smaller congregations, whatever the church's racial composition. Indeed, one of the organizations in our demonstration, consisting solely of congregations under 800 members has declared in its constitution that it will not use government money. One pastor we talked with pointed to the biblical paradigm of Israel's enslavement in Egypt, noting, "You can't finance Moses' movement with Pharaoh's money."

Other congregations lack the staff capacity to secure public funds. They simply do not have the organizational structure to comply with governmental regulations for service delivery. Yet there are others who have tried, and valiantly so, to develop relationships with federal, state and local governments to partner in their outreach efforts, and to access appropriate public funding without actively or improperly proselytizing. And while proposed legislation may offer provisions for faith-based juvenile crime and violence reduction efforts, the difficulty that faith-based organizations have experienced in accessing funds under existing Charitable Choice legislation may foreshadow similar difficulty for faith-based organizations working in juvenile crime and violence reduction.

These congregations also struggle to access resources from the philanthropic community. In most cases, there is a general lack of knowledge about foundations and how they operate. Similarly, many foundations are not fully aware of the work of faith-based organizations in general and of the types of churches and congregations with whom we are working in particular. Such was the impetus, for example, of the Council on Foundations' recent National Philanthropy and the Black Church program, in which foundations and black churches informed each other about their operations and initiatives. Many lessons were learned.

There is still a need, however, for further discussion and action in this vein, especially where smaller congregations are concerned. We are discovering that foundations tend to be more aware of the larger, middle-class congregations in their

communities than they are of the smaller, what Professor John DiIulio has called "blessing stations." These smaller congregations often operate out of storefronts, converted row houses and old movie theaters, and their residential membership (congregants who live within a mile or so of the church) tends to be higher. While the larger congregations often do a good job of providing services for their host communities, their relationship to the host community is informed much of the time by traditional social service models that may or may not involve significant resident involvement in such issues as governance and implementation. When a smaller, resident-based congregation is involved, governance and implementation are fully owned by community residents because they are already a part of the neighborhood (Milsap and Taylor, 1999). Yet these efforts are less visible to the philanthropic community precisely because of the scale at which they operate. Exceptions are organizations such as the Michigan Neighborhood Partnership in Detroit and Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches, where congregations have discovered that, by working collaboratively, they can find their way onto the radar screen of business, philanthropy and government in ways that build partnerships and attract resources. In some cities, P/PV's technical assistance work has been to encourage and facilitate the development of other such collaboratives that can similarly attract these resources.

3. The Challenge of Evaluation

Many of the organizations with whom we are working have little experience with systematic forms of data collection, research, outcomes measurement and program evaluation. Indeed, much extant evaluation of faith-based organizations consists of anecdotal information that brings attention to the success stories of their outreach but offers minimal critical assessment of how the results were achieved. It is not uncommon to hear religious workers lament that their intense work in the field leaves them little time and energy for filling out reports, collecting data and participating in more rigorous forms of program evaluation. Of course, this shortcoming is not unique to faith-based organizations. The secular nonprofit world has struggled mightily with this problem for years, especially the smaller nonprofits whose scale approximates that of the smaller faith-based organizations with whom we are working.

There is a lessening of resistance to evaluation where the faith-based organizations have had the principles of evaluation translated into concepts that clearly fit their mission and tradition. We have found that organizations are willing to discuss evaluation when they see it as part of "stewardship." In most religious traditions, stewardship is a theological concept that refers to the management of resources, most often, but not confined to, financial resources. The ability of P/PV's field staff to communicate with the faith community in language it understands has been vital to our role as an intermediary and to the facilitation of partnerships with government, philanthropy, business and community organizations, and with faith-based institutions involved in this work. They begin to see evaluation as important work, and are much less resistant to it as an idea "imposed" upon them by people who do not understand them (The Annie E. Casey Foundation and United Way of Massachusetts Bay, 1999).

4. The Need for Focused Leadership

Congregations that are willing to focus on high-risk youth ministry as a special and particular need, often to the exclusion of others, are better prepared to work with this population than are those that attempt to be fully comprehensive in their outreach. Congregations in distressed urban communities are often called upon to meet a variety of legitimate needs. The historical role of black churches as centers of neighborhood and community life reflects a similar dynamic. Pastors, ministers and other church leaders respond to a variety of community concerns, evidencing the myriad expectations placed upon them by neighborhood residents. Ministers serve as the primary sources of counseling in their neighborhoods. Congregations and their leadership experience a number of requests for food, clothing and even shelter from the poor in their midst. It is not difficult for those needs to become the driving force behind community service, indeed consuming most, if not all, of a congregation's human service capacity.

When governed by the "tyranny of need," congregations become fragmented in their approach to service, stretched to the limits of resources and unsystematic in the development of their delivery systems. At times, faith-based organizations, responding to the immediacy of crises before them, allocate resources in ways that lead to shortfalls in other areas, weaken the ongoing infrastructure of the congregation's community service system, and lead to the burnout of congregational leadership in general and pastors in particular. Smaller congregations with larger percentages of resident members are particularly vulnerable to such fragmentation and burnout, drawing resources from a smaller pool of human, financial and other resources.

Programs that avoid such fragmentation and burnout are characterized by "focused leadership," pastors and congregational leaders who have determined that they will be driven by specific initiatives rather than general needs. Congregations and faith-based organizations that work effectively with high-risk youth have developed the ability to say "no" to some problems in order to have adequate capacity to address the resulting labor-intensive work. They often do so at the expense of casting a broad net in community service. They do not attempt to be all things to all people. This decision is difficult, given the intensity and extent of needs in poor inner-city communities. The very intensity of need, however, mandates the mobilization of concentrated resources on behalf of targeted populations, especially for congregations with limited resources and smaller (less than 500) membership.

For some congregations, this means filtering all ministries through a lens that focuses on the particular need being addressed. In the Azusa Christian Community and its Ella J. Baker House in the Dorchester section of Boston, pastor Eugene Rivers has successfully directed the energies of his congregation to a focus on youth. Though relatively small in membership, Azusa congregants understand that their energies in mission and community outreach are contextualized by the church's commitment to placing caring adults in the lives of every youth in the neighborhood. All Azusa programming uses this goal as the raison d'être of the congregation's work. While we will discuss the particulars of the role of caring adults later in this essay, it should be noted that Azusa, through its decision to target the community's high-risk youth, developed a clear focus that kept congregational energy from being diffused by the myriad needs and concerns in the community. Indeed, working with youth and their families became the lens through which all community problems were viewed.

5. The Challenge of Targeting High-Risk Youth

The importance of focused leadership is clearly demonstrated in a congregation's ability to specifically target high-risk youth for participation in its programs. Focused leadership is especially critical in the identification of high-risk youth as opposed to at-risk youth.

Many inner-city ministries target neighborhoods in their outreach. The churches rightly reflect a "parish" approach to urban ministry, focusing on communities as the primary repository of social and community life. Many congregations feel a sense of responsibility for community wholeness and well-being, both those churches with significant resident membership and those that are essentially commuter congregations. In the former category, congregations consist of members from the neighborhood and, therefore, have a vested interest in the welfare of the community. In the latter category, black and other urban middle-class congregations whose buildings are located in the inner city but whose membership commutes from the suburbs and other "better" neighborhoods consistently admonish congregants to have a sense of responsibility for the "old neighborhood." Churches and other faith-based institutions develop ministries and programs that reflect this parish idea, trying to meet a variety of needs as they present themselves.

Yet, when it comes to working with high-risk youth, such programs often fall short of the mark precisely because of the strategy of addressing a broad spectrum of needs and, by definition, a broad, territorially based constituency. Youth programs and ministries that target neighborhoods cast a broad net—in the words of the Bible, "Whosoever will, let them come."

When churches and agencies offer such a general invitation, they tend to attract the youth already looking for some type of guidance or at least for safe haven from the distressing elements of life in their communities. Many times, targeting a community's youth without specifying a strategy that addresses the identification and recruitment of high-risk youth leads to a program that works with the good kids in a bad neighborhood. Such work is necessary and noble. It is critical to the development of a particular group of at-risk youth who need love, support and resources for human development and meaningful living. Yet faith-based institutions (and nonsectarian institutions for that matter) are often charged with and assumed to be working with the most difficult youth in a community. This is often not the case.

The difficulty lies in the failure to distinguish between at-risk and high-risk youth. Youth and other community leaders declare that "all of our youth are at-risk youth," as they reflect on the myriad challenges that face youth in disadvantaged communities in our cities. However, some youth are more at risk than others. If one were to consider carefully the term *at risk*, one can assume that to be at risk is to be at risk of "becoming" something—in this case something negative, presumably something profoundly antisocial, or even criminal or violent. Some youth are not at risk of such behavior; some are already so engaged. This population does not normally respond to the "whosoever" call mentioned above.

6. The Need for Collaboration

One thing that helps smaller focused congregations with their work is a willingness to collaborate with other congregations as well as community organizations, law enforcement and educational institutions. When a religious organization decides to "do one thing well," it must create relationships both with agencies that help it do that focused task and with those that can help it with the other tasks of ministry that cannot be neglected.

Cooperation with law enforcement and probation and parole requires that faith-based institutions know the operations of juvenile justice in their communities as well as the players. Clergy are often seen as adversaries to law enforcement because of ongoing prophetic activity. But, as Rev. Rivers noted, "At one point, I had to drop the Father Flanagan routine and recognize that there are some bad kids who need to be locked up. Once I admitted that to the police, we had some grounds for conversation." Similarly, law enforcement officials noted the need for community programs, educational opportunities and jobs. Police officer Paul Joyce regularly visits office buildings in downtown Boston to arrange summer and regular jobs for youth as alternatives to life on the streets. The juvenile probation department has also developed a "Fatherhood Program" that places young men who are on probation into a 12-week group seminar led by clergy, probation officers and court psychologists. It focuses on issues of responsible fatherhood and challenges those young men who are fathers to play an active nurturing role in their children's lives. Cooperative strategies enable the small focused congregation to multiply resources and develop relationships that enable it to maximize its efficiency in delivering services to high-risk youth.

One caution to be noted in this area is that faith-based institutions need to maintain their independence in their relationships with municipal agencies, especially law enforcement. Boston police and clergy agree that a crucial component of their collaboration is each institution's ability to be appropriately critical of one another's role. Both the integrity of law enforcement and the credibility of religious leadership depend on this ability. The demonstration revealed in several cities that collaborative relationships were so clearly driven by local government that community residents questioned whether the religious institutions were merely acting as extensions of law enforcement—"police informants" who were more concerned about locking up youth than helping them. The strength of religious institutions in this collaborative depends on their ability to maintain their credibility as voices of the community, thereby effectively placing them as "brokers" between law enforcement and community residents (Berrien and Winship, 1999).

School-related activities offer a second form of collaboration for congregations seeking partnerships that help their work with high-risk youth. Many urban schools welcome the support of faith-based institutions as both repositories of volunteers and purveyors of a system of values commensurate with many educational goals. Congregation staff and volunteers work with school officials and students in several sites. In Detroit, the Vanguard Community Development Corporation of the Second Ebenezer Baptist Church sends youth worker James Gibson to two middle schools at the behest of their principals to work with youth who exhibit violent behavior in the classroom or who are about to be expelled or both. Rev. Gibson meets with these youth during lunch hours to discuss life issues and choices, and he teaches principles of self-control, conflict resolution and anger management. Gibson, who also has an antiviolence radio program broadcast on a popular Detroit urban station, greets youth at the doors of each school (right beside the metal detectors) on a regular basis, establishing himself as a positive

presence for community youth. The principals are grateful for the support of congregations and, in particular, for Gibson's presence as a role model. Rev. Dennis Talbert and the Rosedale Park Baptist Church offer a similar program for the troubled youth of the Peter Vetal Middle School in Northwest Detroit. In each case, school and congregation officials are careful to avoid overtly religious programming in the school; yet they obviously believe that having adult figures in the school who model clear values is a plus in an educational institution working with relatively scarce resources.

A second critical dimension of collaboration is establishing cooperative relationships among churches. For many years, a number of foundations have expressed a desire to work with congregations that have already developed collaborative relationships with other congregations in order to be eligible for funding. By identifying congregations that formed a collaboration with a separate 501(c)(3) incorporation and a clear mission of social and community outreach, foundations were assured that their money was not going to overtly religious, especially proselytizing, work by congregations. At the same time, we are learning that congregations that are actively engaged in partnering with other faith-based institutions have built a capacity for accountability that makes them even stronger candidates for philanthropic funding. They are also able to draw upon more resources than if they "flew solo": more volunteers, more diverse services (as each congregation adds the strengths of its own programming to the total program), and coverage of a broader area served by a multiplicity of sites in the church collaborative. Finally, a congregation that has learned to work cooperatively with other congregations is simply better prepared to work with other agencies as well, including community organizations, justice and law enforcement agencies, and funders.

7. The Importance of Planning and Program Strategies

Faith-based institutions have varied experience with the process of strategic planning. Historically, much of their outreach has been, as noted above, in response to perceived needs in the community. When we began working with congregations to develop strategic plans for the implementation or expansion of their work, we met with some resistance. Yet, as with evaluation, many congregations and faith-based organizations overcame their initial resistance to planning program strategies when they came to see them as part of ministry and stewardship.

Developing a targeting strategy was a critical part of the planning process. Faith-based organizations had to develop a specific strategy for identifying high-risk youth and recruiting them into their programs. Many chose to receive referrals directly from the juvenile justice agencies in their communities. Churches that receive referrals from juvenile justice agencies do so in a variety of ways. Many faith-based institutions take advantage of diversion programs that enable community organizations and agencies to have youth assigned to their charge. Youth receive mentoring from church members and very often perform some form of community service. By linking young people with persons in the community, churches mobilize human capital to support youth. In Oakland, the Better Choices initiative led by Westside Missionary Baptist Church works with Oakland Police and Clergy Together (OPACT) to divert nonviolent first offenders into mentoring relationships with church laypersons as an alternative to adjudication or incarceration. From there, youth are brought to participate in existing church programming, such as after-school tutorial and job-readiness programs. Some have gone on to become leaders in the youth chapter of the local community development corporation, where they are active in the civic life of the West Oakland neighborhood.

Adolescent Resource Management, a faith-based nonprofit, developed a similar program for the churches of Atlantic City and is assisting the African American Interdenominational Ministries (AAIM) of Philadelphia in developing their program as part of our demonstration.

AAIM, which represents a significant portion of the black churches in Philadelphia, has developed a link with the Sleighton School, an institution for adjudicated youth in the nearby suburbs. Sleighton will identify youth from AAIM's targeted area, after which mentors will be assigned to the youth from churches in the neighborhood. They build relationships with the young people while incarcerated and continue them upon release.

In Cleveland, the Clergy United for Juvenile Justice's "Project Restoration" takes referrals directly from the Cuyahoga County juvenile justice system: the program's director is also the chaplain at the juvenile detention center. The Foundation Alliance Interfaith To Heal Society (FAITHS), part of The San Francisco Foundation, has placed a chaplain in the county juvenile hall; she links incarcerated youth with religious institutions in their communities, an interesting challenge in such a religiously diverse city.

The GRACE program in Detroit recruits its youth on the streets. Director Alex Montaner began the program while serving as youth pastor at St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church in his neighborhood. His former life as a gang leader has equipped him to learn who's who on the street, and to be an available presence to recruit those seeking to leave gang life. GRACE began when Montaner, just released from prison, went to his priest at St. Anne's and told of his desire to turn his life over to God and begin a new life. His priest suggested that his early release from prison was God's act of grace and that Montaner should extend that grace to others. Montaner went to work to develop a program that would offer local youth an alternative to gang life. With the help of St. Anne's parish, he negotiated a truce with the neighborhood gangs. The gang leaders told him that if he were to take young people out of the gangs, they would have to be offered something better: education and employment. The gang leaders also insisted that the employment opportunities be good paying jobs with health benefits. As of early 1999, GRACE had served close to 250 youth 18 to 24 years old, with no episodes of recidivism and a better than 90 percent job retention rate. As the program expands and begins to work with a younger age group (12 to 18 years), it is developing new plans and guidelines for recruitment that include direct referrals from schools and other agencies.

When the Metro Denver Black Church Initiative joined the demonstration, it sent out its own request for proposals to enlist congregations that would both develop programs for high-risk youth and enter into a learning and referral community where they pledged to meet regularly for planning; sharing ideas, resources and strategies; and offering mutual support. Having worked with such faith-based technical assistance agencies as the Institute for Church Administration and Management at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, they were well positioned to offer these congregations support in their development of strategic plans and the implementation of their early outreach. One of the congregations, Grace and Truth Full Gospel Pentecostal Church, offers a program called Positive Change. Led by the Rev. Tostanga Gay-Moore, this program identifies high-risk girls in junior and senior high schools as well as the juvenile detention center. The program is conducted at Gilliam Youth Services Center, Cole Middle School, Gove Community School, and Grace and Truth Church. Services available to all participants include weekly group and individual tutorial sessions in study skills and specific subjects; classes in grooming, self-confi-

dence, etiquette, decision-making, and daily living skills; and family reconciliation through the development of communication, conflict resolution and interpersonal skills development. Rev. Gay-Moore and her staff are the critical components of these programs, however, as youth point to their involvement as central motivating factors not only in their attendance but also their desire to succeed. Indeed, Rev. Gay-Moore screens and trains all volunteers in relationship-building skills as the precursor to program service, and conducts counseling sessions on such issues as peer pressure and career guidance. Teachers, community leaders and other resources are used in this counseling component.

8. The Importance of Building Relationships of Trust

Effective programming alone does not make for successful outreach. John DiIulio's study of effective programs in the nation's prisons led him to conclude that the right personnel is more crucial to effective programming than is program content (DiIulio, 1990). The reality of the difference that caring adults make in the lives of young people has been documented through studies of a variety of mentoring programs as well as through the work of such important organizations as Big Brothers Big Sisters (Tierney and Grossman, 1995). Ministries such as the ones named in previous sections all bear out such findings. The approaches vary, targeting strategies differ, and program content and curricula are tailored to local constituencies. But one thing they all share is a commitment to mobilizing a significant number of adults to mentor or befriend youth in need of caring adults in their lives—adults they can trust. Building relationships is a matter of faith; with a difficult-to-reach population, it takes time, often on the streets as well as during program hours.

Time on the streets involves developing a presence in the neighborhood sufficient to identify and win the trust of high-risk youth. While all youth in a neighborhood may be considered at risk, youth actively engaged in criminal behavior constitute a smaller percentage of young people in a distressed community. Building relationships with youth and young adults in urban neighborhoods enables church workers to know who the truly high-risk youth are in a given community. But such presence requires time—time on the streets and on the playgrounds—which enables young people to understand that there is someone who really cares about them and the communities in which they live. This creates trust, a resource especially scarce in African American communities (Fukuyama, 1996).

Trust is the basis for significant relationship building with high-risk youth. Developing trust cannot be underestimated as part of a strategy for gaining knowledge of who's who in the community in general and among the urban youth subculture in particular. Rev. Ray Hammond of the Ten Point Coalition recounted how drug dealers responded to local clergy's initial attempts to build relationships with youth on the streets of Boston. Hammond noted that the young men were quite suspicious of the presence of the ministers and church workers on night patrols and in parks and playgrounds where youth hung out. Several dealers thought the ministers were just out for publicity and that their initiative would be short lived. "Actually," offered one, "I don't see much difference between me and you preachers. I drive a nice car; you drive a nice car. I wear nice clothes and jewelry, and so do you. I got lots of women, and I know you preachers do too. If you're still here six months from now, I'll believe you're for real."

Rev. Rivers speaks candidly about learning the lesson of presence on the street. Shortly after moving to the Dorchester section of Boston, he befriended a young drug

dealer, Selvin Brown, who came to trust Rivers over a period of time as one deeply concerned about and committed to the community. In one conversation, Rivers asked Brown why he thought that drug dealers were more successful than the church at reaching youth in the streets. Brown replied that "when Johnny goes past my corner on the way to school, I'm there, you're not. When he comes home from school, I'm there, you're not. When he goes to the corner store for a loaf of bread, I'm there, you're not. When he leaves to take it home, I'm there, you're not. I win, you lose."

Rivers took that lesson to mean that the church would have to establish a presence on the streets in order to gain the trust of area youth. He, along with other ministers and church leaders, went on weekly Friday night street patrols. While many saw this as a move to strengthen neighborhood safety through the presence of religious men "taking back the streets," Rev. Jeffrey Brown of Union Baptist Church in Cambridge explains that relationship building was a key part of the patrol strategy. "For the first six months," said Brown (no relation to the drug dealer), "very few people talked to us. They had to get to know us." When asked what they talked about with the street youth and drug dealers when they did have conversations, the pastor noted that street patrol members did not preach; rather, they asked how they, as churches and church leaders, could be of service to the youth—offering counsel, job and educational opportunities and a variety of sound alternatives to life on the streets. Rivers wryly noted: "These kids want jobs, real jobs—they'll even work at McDonald's if they don't have to wear those funny hats. The key is that when we offer them help, we have to be able to deliver. The jobs have to be there for the young men."

In Cleveland, Khalid Salaam and the others who operate the rites-of-passage program make strong use of group discussions in their workshops. As a result of the many hours Salaam and his staff spend on the streets and in the schools building trust with youth, the young people open up to them on such potentially sensitive subjects as sexuality and domestic violence. Their martial arts program builds trust among youth and between youth and adults, and helps develop discipline and respect for authority as well. Trust is an important component of the work of the volunteers from Love Gospel Assembly in the Bronx. They are community residents, well acquainted with the ways of the streets, and, according to Pastor Ron Bailey, many are former gang members, or drug dealers or users or both. Their ability to relate to the struggles of community youth is enhanced by their own biographies. They understand the need for trusting relationships as the seed bed of their outreach. Not incidentally, through a combination of trust and street smarts, they are less likely to be taken in by street cons or to feel inappropriate sympathy that lets youth "off the hook" for irresponsible behavior.

When working with gang youth, the ability to build relationships of trust is both critical and strategic. Gang youth hold loyalty as an intense value. Their loyalty to the gang reflects much of the sense of "family" that Lewis Yablonsky identified in his classic work on how youth gangs function (Yablonsky, 1984). In the GRACE program in Detroit, Alex Montaner is able to use the positive capital of loyalty in developing his work with ex-gang youth and young adults. He works, through relationship building, to create a new sense of loyalty to the adult staff as new leaders for young people and finds that often that loyalty to leadership (including his own) motivates young people to perform well in their newly found jobs. Young men interviewed in the GRACE program were unanimous in their assertion that it was their relationships with staff, not the structure of the program itself, that provided them with their primary motivation to succeed.

In working with young women, trust is also important. Denver's Rev. Gay-Moore is a strong authority figure, but she also exudes the compassion of an older sister. Young women at risk see her as someone to whom they can relate and who provides an example for them to follow. Rev. Eugene Rivers has noted the role he and some of his male staff have been called to play by young women in the Baker House neighborhood. While much of the attention in this initiative has been focused on high-risk males, girls challenge Rivers and the men at Baker House to provide strong role models of men who will not abandon them (as some of their fathers have) and who can relate to them in a nonsexual manner (in contrast to many males their own age).

9. The Role of Faith

Here the motivation of faith looms large. When volunteers are asked why they engage in such intensive work, they point to a sense of calling. "This is what Jesus would do." "The Lord told me to go to the hedges and the highways." "This is Allah's work." "This is what I am called to do." "When you pray to Allah, you must pray for the Creation of Allah. These children are part of Allah's creation." Faith-motivated volunteers draw strength from their sense of mission, even when program goals do not press for youth to find faith themselves. They see faith as that which enables them to do the difficult work of ministering to underserved youth, to take the time necessary to develop relationships of trust and accountability, and to endure the struggles and setbacks that inevitably come when youth "fall away" or become recidivists. Faith becomes the motivation for being involved in the lives of high-risk youth, the impetus for caring.

This does not mean that such adults require no training and support. Indeed, because of the intensity of the work, those who minister to high-risk youth require training and care themselves. Burnout is always a danger, and if volunteers leave a program after a short time, it can further damage youth's sense of trust in adults in general and authority figures in particular. In discussing mentoring relationships, Jean Grossman notes: "Volunteers typically come to mentoring programs because they want to help youth. Without establishing trust, however, mentors can never truly support the youth with whom they interact. Learning to trust, especially for youth who have been let down before, requires time..."(1999, p.15). This means that ministries that use volunteers for work with high-risk youth must invest in the care of the volunteer base as well as in the youth themselves. And congregations must screen volunteers to ensure that they have recruited persons who, given proper support, are willing and able to invest time over the long haul to build trust and strengthen relationships.

Much of the training and support for these volunteers is buttressed by their faith commitment. In Cleveland, Philadelphia and Detroit, the congregations have developed training manuals that combine the best of existing research on "best practices" in mentoring with the spiritual principles of their faith traditions. Part of what we will be studying will be the extent to which the value-added dimension of "faith" offers a significant difference in the outcome of the mentoring process. In the early months of evaluation, the clear signal being sent by congregations is that for high-risk youth to reach the goals of avoiding violence, achieving literacy and accessing jobs there must be a transformation of values that reorders the youth's sense of meaning and purpose in life. Congregations are places where questions of meaning are central to institutional life, and youth led into those environments find the context for exploring those questions with adults who, motivated by their faith, truly care about them. The young people who are part of the GRACE youth program in Detroit meet in a variety of churches in Southwest Detroit, where local pastors talk with young people about

life choices, and how their own congregational traditions address those issues. In the program at the Rosedale Park Baptist Church, youth worker Willie Vance meets with troubled youth at the Peter Vetal Middle School in leadership development classes. There, he and youth pastor Dennis Talbert build the relationships that eventually attract young people to their church programs, where they can dig more deeply into the values tradition of the congregation.

Some worry that the faith factor in volunteers may be abused through overzealous preaching at youth, teachings of narrow bigotry and prejudice sometimes associated with religious groups, and a refusal to cooperate with others because of theological or doctrinal concerns. Interestingly, most religious alliances that work with high-risk youth are able to bracket doctrinal concerns for the larger goal of reaching youth and changing their behavior and circumstances. Interfaith cooperation is evident in high-risk youth initiatives sponsored by the Clergy United for Juvenile Justice in Cleveland, where an alliance of Baptist and Islamic clergy have targeted youth in the fifth police district. Youth enroll in the rites-of-passage program and martial arts training offered by local Muslim organizations and are assigned mentors recruited from the Baptist churches in the neighborhood and trained by the local Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliate. In addition, drug and alcohol screening and counseling is provided by Catholic Charities, while the entire program is managed under the auspices of Lutheran Youth and Families services. Clearly, theological and religious differences take a back seat to "doing the work" in Cleveland.

Similarly, the work of the Michigan Neighborhood Partnership in which Protestants, Catholics, Jews and Muslims work together, and the Ten Point Coalition, where the support of the Jewish community has been indispensable in mobilizing suburban resources for inner-city young people, reflects the ability of organizations from different religious traditions to work together for the common good. The lesson seems to be that when the stakes are high, the mission difficult, and the labor intense, doctrinal concerns are secondary to results.

Further, while evangelism serves as a key factor in many initiatives, it often takes a less direct form than overzealous preaching. Both Amy Sherman (1999) and Heidi Unruh (1999) have shown through their research how the most important dimensions of evangelism have been the presence of clear sets of moral values contained in the offering of faith perspectives to people in distressed communities. Consistent with the notion that people need some form of meaning system to navigate life's journey, an evangelistic component within the faith community offers a moral compass to high-risk youth. The methods, therefore, have more to do with the caring adult sharing her or his faith with youth than with some form of hard-sell rally for God approach that calls for confessions of faith in a large-scale meeting.

Sherman's and Unruh's findings are consistent with our experience with the sites in the demonstration. While the faith commitment of the organizations, staff and volunteers is explicit, they seem to navigate the tricky waters of church-state issues, offer faith through relational rather than confrontational means, and respect religious difference in ways that enable them to partner with a variety of other organizations, faith-based or not, for what they perceive to be the common good. We are also discovering that the faith-based organizations are using this initiative as an occasion to expand their own definitions of religious transformation. While not abandoning the core values of personal transformation through religious faith, faith-based organizations are recognizing that other changes in the lives of youth *are* worth pursuing in their outreach programs. Rev. Ray Rivera, of the Latino Pastoral Action

Center, addressed this in a meeting of ministers at our South Bronx site: "While we want to see kids develop religious faith, we must be willing to notice that other areas of change and growth are part of godly transformation in the lives of youth. When a truant goes back to school, when a kid leaves a gang and joins our basketball program, when a kid stops using drugs and gets a job—even if he doesn't start going to church, that's still transformation."

Looking Ahead

What we learn about faith-based initiatives with high-risk youth continues to evolve from the efforts of the organizations involved in this initiative. As the story unfolds, we should be able to make more rigorous judgments about the extent, efficacy, capacity and replicability of their efforts. For now, it is sufficient to state that preliminary findings clearly point to the importance of faith-based initiatives in working with high-risk youth and the need for all concerned to take a closer look at the potential for building on the relatively small efforts that such congregational efforts currently represent.

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